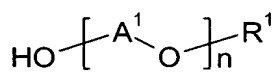


IN THE CLAIMS

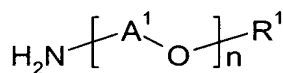
Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A process for the production of semifinished products or leather, wherein pelts, pickled pelts or semifinished products are treated with

- a) at least one sheet silicate and
- b) at least one copolymer which is ~~obtainable~~ obtained by copolymerization of at least one ethylenically unsaturated dicarboxylic anhydride (A), derived from at least one dicarboxylic acid of 4 to 8 carbon atoms,
at least one vinylaromatic compound (B1) or
at least one oligomer (B2) of branched or straight-chain C₂-C₁₀-alkene, at least one oligomer having an average molecular weight M_n of from 300 to 5 000 g/mol or being obtainable by oligomerization of at least 3 equivalents of C₂-C₁₀-alkene,
and
optionally at least one ethylenically unsaturated monomer (C) differing from (A) and having at least one hetero atom,
and reaction with
at least one compound (D) of the formula I a or I b



I a



I b

and optionally hydrolysis with water or aqueous alkaline solution,

where, in formula I a and I b,

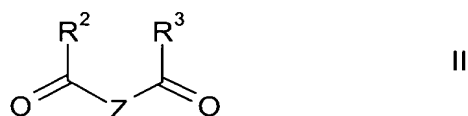
A¹ are identical or different and are C₂-C₆-alkylene

R¹ is linear or branched C₁-C₂₀-alkyl and

n is an integer from 1 to 200.

Claim 2 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein pelts, pickled pelts or semifinished products are additionally treated with

- c) at least one substance which is selected from dicarbonyl compounds of the formula II



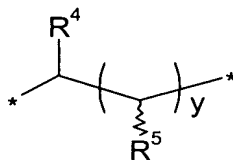
and substances which liberate a dicarbonyl compound of the formula II in the presence of water, where, in formula II,

R^2 and R^3 are identical or different and are selected from hydrogen, C_1 - C_{12} -alkyl, C_3 - C_{12} -cycloalkyl, substituted or unsubstituted, C_7 - C_{13} -aralkyl, C_6 - C_{14} -aryl, substituted or unsubstituted, it being possible in each case for two neighboring substituents to be linked to one another with the formation of a ring;

or R^2 and R^3 are linked to one another with formation of a ring,

Z is selected from a single bond and bivalent organic groups, which in turn are selected from substituted or unsubstituted C_1 - C_{12} -alkylene units, unsubstituted or substituted C_5 - C_{12} -cycloalkylene and unsubstituted or substituted C_6 - C_{14} -arylene.

Claim 3 (Original): The process according to claim 2, wherein Z is



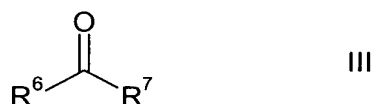
where

R^4 is selected from hydrogen, C_1 - C_{12} -alkyl, C_3 - C_{12} -cycloalkyl, substituted or unsubstituted, C_7 - C_{13} -aralkyl, C_6 - C_{14} -aryl, substituted or unsubstituted,

y is an integer from 1 to 4, and

R⁵ are identical or different and are selected from hydrogen, C₁-C₁₂-alkyl, C₃-C₁₂-cycloalkyl, substituted or unsubstituted, C₇-C₁₃-aralkyl, C₆-C₁₄-aryl, substituted or unsubstituted, it being possible for R⁴ with neighboring R⁵ or in each case two neighboring radicals R⁵ to be linked to one another with the formation of a ring.

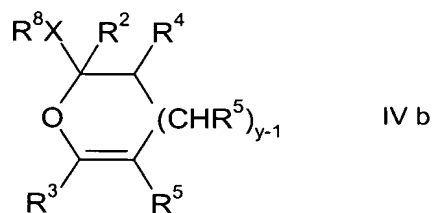
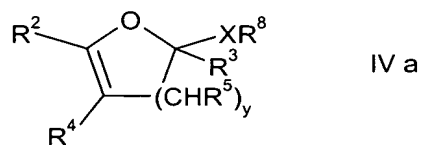
Claim 4 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~either of claims 2 and 3~~ claim 2, wherein at least one substance which liberates a dicarbonyl compound of the formula II in the presence of water is obtainable by reacting at least one carbonyl compound of the formula III



where

R⁶ and R⁷ are identical or different and are selected from hydrogen, C₁-C₁₂-alkyl, C₃-C₁₂-cycloalkyl, substituted or unsubstituted, C₇-C₁₃-aralkyl, C₆-C₁₄-aryl, substituted or unsubstituted, it being possible for R⁶ and R⁷ to be linked to one another with formation of a ring,

with at least one dicarbonyl compound of the formula II and with at least one cyclic compound of the formula IV a or IV b



where

X is selected from oxygen, sulfur and N-R⁸, and

R^8 are identical or different and are selected from hydrogen, C_1 - C_{12} -alkyl, C_3 - C_{12} -cycloalkyl, substituted or unsubstituted, C_7 - C_{13} -aralkyl, C_6 - C_{14} -aryl, substituted or unsubstituted, formyl, CO- C_1 - C_{12} -alkyl, CO- C_3 - C_{12} -cycloalkyl, substituted or unsubstituted, CO- C_7 - C_{13} -aralkyl, CO- C_6 - C_{14} -aryl, it being possible for R^2 and R^8 or R^5 and R^8 to be linked to one another with formation of a ring and, where X is N- R^8 , it being possible for two radicals R^8 to be linked to one another with formation of a ring.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any of claims 2 to 4~~ claim 2, wherein X is oxygen.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any of claims 2 to 5~~ claim 2, wherein, in formula IV a, R^2 to R^5 are each hydrogen and R^8 is methyl.

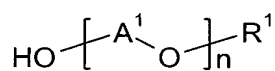
Claim 7 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any of claims 1 to 6~~ claim 1, wherein styrene is selected as a vinylaromatic compound (B1) in at least one copolymer (b).

Claim 8 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any of claims 1 to 7~~ claim 1, wherein a sheet silicate having a number average particle diameter of up to 2 μm is used as the sheet silicate (a).

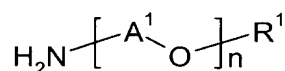
Claim 9 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any of claims 1 to 8~~ claim 1, wherein drying to a residual water content of 45% by weight or less is effected after the treatment with (a), (b) and, if appropriate, (c).

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): A formulation comprising

- a) at least one sheet silicate and
- b) at least one copolymer which is ~~obtainable~~ obtained by copolymerization of at least one ethylenically unsaturated dicarboxylic anhydride (A), derived from at least one dicarboxylic acid of 4 to 8 carbon atoms,
at least one vinylaromatic compound (B1) or
at least one oligomer (B2) of branched or straight-chain C₂-C₁₀-alkene, at least one oligomer having an average molecular weight M_n of from 300 to 5 000 g/mol or being obtainable by oligomerization of at least 3 equivalents of C₂-C₁₀-alkene,
and
optionally at least one ethylenically unsaturated monomer (C) differing from (A) and having at least one hetero atom,
and reaction with
at least one compound (D) of the formula I a or I b



I a



I b

and optionally hydrolysis with water or an aqueous alkaline solution,

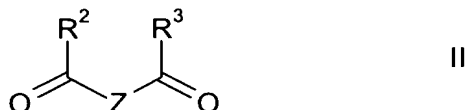
where, in formulae I a and I b,

A¹ are identical or different and are C₂-C₆-alkylene,

R¹ is linear or branched C₁-C₂₀-alkyl, and

n is an integer from 1 to 200.

Claim 11 (Original): The formulation according to claim 10, additionally comprising at least one substance which is selected from dicarbonyl compounds of the formula II



and substances which liberate a dicarbonyl compound of the formula II in the presence of water, where, in the formula II,

R^2 and R^3 are identical or different and are selected from hydrogen, C_1 - C_{12} -alkyl, C_3 - C_{12} -cycloalkyl, substituted or unsubstituted, C_7 - C_{13} -aralkyl, C_6 - C_{14} -aryl, substituted or unsubstituted, it being possible in each case for two neighboring radicals to be linked to one another by formation of a ring,

Z is selected from a single bond and a bivalent organic group which in turn are selected from substituted or unsubstituted C_1 - C_{12} -alkylene units, unsubstituted or substituted C_5 - C_{12} -cycloalkylene, unsubstituted or substituted C_6 - C_{14} -arylene.

Claim 12 (Currently Amended): The formulation according to claim 10 [[or 11]], which is an aqueous formulation.

Claim 13 (Currently Amended): The formulation according to claim 10 [[or 11]], which is a pulverulent formulation.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended): [[The]] A process for the preparation of [[a]] the formulation according to ~~any of claims 10 to 12~~ claim 10, wherein

- a) at least one sheet silicate and
- b) at least one copolymer and, ~~if appropriate~~ optionally

- c) at least one dicarbonyl compound of the formula II or
at least one substance which liberates a dicarbonyl compound of the formula II
in the presence of water are mixed with one another.

Claim 15 (Currently Amended): A process for the preparation of [[a]] the pulverulent formulation according to claim 13, wherein said formulation is obtained by spray-drying.

Claim 16 (Currently Amended): A semifinished product or leather produced by a process according to ~~any of claims 1 to 9~~ claim 1.

Claim 17 (Currently Amended): ~~The use of a semifinished product or leather, produced by a process according to any of claims 1 to 9;~~ A method for the production of articles of clothing, pieces of furniture and automobiles and automotive parts comprising utilizing the semifinished product or leather produced by the process according to claim 1 to produce clothing, furniture, an automobile and an automobile part.